

PROPHECY AND THE LAYING ON OF THE HANDS OF THE PRESBYTERY -
A BASIC DOCTRINE
Hebrews 6:2
(THE PRESBYTERY MEETING)

1. WHAT IS A PRESBYTER?

A person with a leadership ministry in the Body of Christ. One of the ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11 that “shepherd” or “oversees” the Church.

2. WHAT IS A PRESBYTERY?

A Presbytery is a group of two or more Presbyters who are anointed of God with prophetic authority, and gifts, to confirm and impart God’s mind to the Body of Christ through the Laying On Of Hands. (I Timothy 4:14 “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands OF THE PRESBYTERY.”)

3. WHEN DOES A PRESBYTERY MEET?

A Presbytery of suitable ministers should be summoned by the leadership of the local Church when a need for prophetic guidance seems apparent. (Acts 13:1-3).

4. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESBYTERY MEETING?

“Elected officers in the local Church are not God’s pattern. His government is not a democracy. HE is a King with a kingdom and HE wants to rule that kingdom (theocracy). There must be a way for the local Church to know whom to use where. The pattern of God is that every officer, every person who functions and operates in the Body of Christ shall operate because they have been put in that position by the pastor and the help of the prophetic word and the person then becomes responsible not only to his pastor, but responsible to God to flow in his ministry. The laying on of hands is a tool to establish the local Church. When you present yourself for the laying on of hands, you are telling God, your pastor, and the congregation with whom you worship, that you are open and ready to assume further responsibility.

Through the laying on of their hands, the Presbytery ministers to individuals and couples.

Through prophecy, visions, wisdom and other types of revelation, the Presbyters confirm God’s will to each person and also impart spiritual empowerments for his ministry in the Body of Christ. The challenge and inspiration that is given to each person gives special significance to their place in the Church (I Timothy 1:18 “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.”)

(II Timothy 1:6 “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”)

II Timothy 1:6 (Amplified): That is why I would remind you to stir up – rekindle the embers, fan the flame and keep burning – the (gracious) gift of God (the inner fire) that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands.

5. WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP?

The Pastor and elders must lead the way in preparation through prayer, fasting and the building of faith through the ministry of the Word.

(Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the Word of God.”)

(II Timothy 2:15 NASB “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”)

(Titus 2:7 NASB “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity IN DOCTRINE dignified.”)

6. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IS SAID IN THE PRESBYTERY MEETINGS?

The local Church leadership must assume responsibility for all that is done and said. People’s lives are at stake. This makes the choice of the presbytery very important. “Proven ministries” will not destroy the local Church, but will build. The Church becomes responsible for helping bring God’s Word to fulfillment in the individual’s life. (I Peter 5:2 “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”)

1 Peter 5:2 (Amplified)- “Tend, nurture, guard, guide and fold the flock of God that is (your responsibility), not by coercion or constraint but willingly; not dishonorably motivated by the advantages and profits (belonging to the office) but eagerly and cheerfully.”

7. HOW LARGE MUST A CHURCH BE TO HAVE A PRESBYTERY?

Every Church that is functioning as a responsible Church in its community should have the benefits of this ministry. The Church should be more than just a prayer group. And, in a large Church, this ministry should be considered more than just an advertising gimmick. Sometimes when a Church is just getting started, the people can be taken to other churches where this ministry may be received. The Church and the leadership should have enough going so that a Presbytery could feel ministry would be carried through and not lost in a fly-by-night church operation.

Acts 15:32 “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, EXHORTED the brethren with many words, and CONFIRMED them.”

Acts 15:41 “And so were the Churches ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH, and increased in number daily.”

8. SHOULD JUST ANYONE IN THE CHURCH RECEIVE THIS MINISTRY?

The Church leadership must work in conjunction with the visiting Presbytery. The various spiritual levels of the Church people must be recognized. John 21:15-17. For instance, it is better to simply pray over teenagers, rather than get into elaborate prophecies. New converts, and the very elderly, etc., each have their particular needs and problems. Some people want answers through a Presbytery that should come through pastoral counsel! Everyone should eventually receive this ministry. The Ministry of the Laying On Of Hands is a cardinal doctrine of The Church – Hebrews 6.

9. HOW DOES THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP DETERMINE WHEN A PRESBYTERY IS NEEDED?

As new people are added to the Church, they too need this ministry. A growing Church, therefore, could have this type of ministry once a year. The Holy Spirit can and will bear witness to those leading the Church. The normal, everyday needs of a Church should be met by the ministries within the Church.

10. SHOULD PRESBYTERS BE BROUGHT IN FROM OTHER PLACES FOR THIS MINISTRY?

It is possible for developed Churches to have sufficient and varied ministries to provide a capable Presbytery. It is a safeguard, however, to bring in proven ministries that are not personally acquainted with the people. When people work together in a Church over a long period of time, familiarity will often prejudice the minds of the local ministry to areas of service and challenge that should be presented. This does not mean that Presbyters from the local Church cannot participate, such as the pastor. Note that Jacob could prophesy effectively over his own sons, Genesis 48. It simply means the visiting Presbyters will assume the bulk of the responsibility in ministry. Also, bringing in a special ministry enables the local Church to adjust itself spiritually and psychologically to the importance of what is to be done - - and to listen more attentively to what is said.

Acts 15:22 “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.

Vss. 25, 26 “It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord to send, chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

11. WHY IS A PRESBYTERY MORE EFFECTIVE THAN JUST ONE PRESBYTER?

No one man has it all. I Cor. 12:7, 11 “But the manifestation of the Spirit, is given to every man to profit withal. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.”

Each ministry in the Body of Christ has its special gift and expression; this is why the Church is called a Body! Invariably, there will be a more complete expression of truth and challenge when various types of prophetic ministries take part. The strength of this ministry lies in the ability of each Presbyter to cooperate with and constructively judge that which is prophesied.

I Cor. 14:29 “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.”

Both Presbyter and candidate are protected. The Scriptures emphasize the importance of two or three witnesses. II Cor. 13:1 - “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” The plurality of ministry also tends to minimize any one ministry’s importance, and conveys in a fresh and living example to the local Church that the time of the one-man ministry is over.

12. SHOULD THERE BE AN APOSTLE AND A PROPHET PRESENT?

Observing dozens of Presbytery meetings, my conviction is that the presence of an apostle makes a decided contribution to such a meeting. Strong government is quite essential in this all-important type of meeting. To have a man with a true prophets' mantle is also of great importance. The ultimate good from the Presbytery will be traced to the quality of those who lay hands on the people.

13. HOW MANY SHOULD THERE BE IN A PRESBYTERY?

At least two (II Cor. 13:1 see above), but three would be even better. Often a large number can be present and confirm what is done, but it is not necessary to hear from each one. I Cor. 14:32 "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets". When sufficient is said to express the mind of God, why attempt to prolong the ministry?

14. ARE THERE ANY LIMITATIONS THAT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED IN A PRESBYTERY?

When prophetic mantle lifts, you might as well stop. When the atmosphere is strained, faith is weak, the people or the Presbytery are overly tired, the ministry can't help but be affected. The people must assume the responsibility of maintaining the Presence of God in the meetings through faith, praise and worship and with prayer. Keep the expectancy alive!

15. SHOULD PEOPLE FROM THE AUDIENCE, OR THOSE NEWLY ENTERING MINISTRY BE ENCOURAGED TO PROPHECY OVER THE CANDIDATES?

The Church must assume the responsibility for what is said; accordingly the Church should exercise the privilege of choosing the Presbytery. (I Thess. 5:12, 13; I Cor. 16:16, 18).

In some atmospheres everyone could prophesy something if he would let himself go. The purpose of having a Presbytery is that they can perform this ministry, so let them do it, and the visitors can sit and listen. Those new to the ministry should simply observe. Those that are entering this phase of ministry for the first time, should be allowed to be with the Presbyters and sense how the Spirit is witnessing with them, and gradually they can be taking part with the confirmation of the other Presbyters. (I Timothy 3:6) NOT A NOVICE.

THE CANDIDATE

16. WHAT SHOULD BE THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE CANDIDATE?

He should be justified by faith – Romans 5:1

Baptized in water – Acts 2:38

Baptized in the Holy Spirit – I John 2:20, 27

Sometimes, the Lord has a word for people when they do not have all three of the above experiences, but this should be the goal that we set before the Church. Many times, if the person has not yet received the Holy Spirit infilling, they may receive at that time by the laying on of hands.

17. SHOULD HUSBANDS AND WIVES RECEIVE MINISTRY TOGETHER? Yes, even if one of them is hesitant or not as spiritually developed as the mate. I Peter 3:7 “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” If one of them does not want this ministry, and the other is earnestly seeking God and desires it, we do not feel that it should be withheld from the one that desires the ministry.

18. A PERSON WITH AN UNSAVED MATE REQUIRES SPECIAL HELP. Sometimes a Presbytery and a fasting group of people can minister to a man or woman with an unsaved mate in a wonderful way. In prayer alone, great comfort and strength can be extended, and Satan’s power curtailed.

19. A CANDIDATE SHOULD FAST AND PREPARE HIS HEART.

Anyone serious enough about this ministry should be willing to fast 3 days. If not consecutive days, at least 3 different days. If possible, time should be taken off from work, to better seek the Lord. Make a Scriptural study of the subject of “fasting”.

20. HOW SHOULD CANDIDATES BE CHOSEN? Presbytery meetings should be planned with plenty of advance notice. I Timothy 5:22 “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partakers of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.” Local leadership should know who the people are that desire this ministry.

21. SHOULD DENOMINATIONAL PEOPLE AND “NEW VISITORS” BE ALLOWED TO RECEIVE THIS MINISTRY IN A PRESBYTERY MEETING?

Experience teaches us that we should move very slowly in ministering to people that are not involved in a revival Church where spiritual gifts are encouraged. Their inability to operate the ministry given to them by the Presbytery produces frustration and confusion. Operation of Holy Spirit Gifts is dependent upon anointed leadership and an atmosphere of freedom and faith.

22. WHAT DO YOU DO IF NO PROPHECY COMES THROUGH THE PRESBYTERY?

Whenever this happens, thank God for it! Apparently you are not ready for this ministry. However, prayer should be offered and the individual should be blessed by the laying on of hands. If they have fasted and sought God, the Church of God should bless them in HIS Name.

23. RECOGNIZE THE LIMITATIONS OF A PRESBYTERY! Some folks want pastoral counsel to come through prophecy. This is foolishness. Some want to know whom to marry – don't degrade the Presbytery by such inquiry. This ministry is to bring God's challenge and ministry to you in a heavenly realm. Anyone who is ready for this ministry, should have enough spiritual common sense to know how to make basic decisions about living. An anointed Presbytery speaks as God gives the words. If God doesn't give the words, don't embarrass God's servants by demanding of them what God HIMSELF won't give!

24. HAVE PROPER ESTEEM FOR THE PRESBYTERY!

Acknowledge them as human beings, capable of fault and error. But also honor the ministry that God has given. Accept them as men and women of God that are earnestly endeavoring to help their brethren know more perfectly the will of God. (Note: Acts 10:26 "But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.") Give them the benefit of any doubt. Every ministry has certain mannerisms and personality quirks, but do not let this prejudice you against their ability to communicate the living God!

We have known some people who are insulted when they don't hear what they want to hear.

Take it as it comes! It is possible that you may feel that you are an apostle, for instance, and God doesn't have that in mind at all! Everything from God isn't easily perceived as a blessing. Every child of God also undergoes spankings and discipline. Don't worry about being embarrassed in front of the Church, or if you do, admit you are not ready for this ministry!

25. WHAT SHOULD THE CANDIDATE DO WHEN HE COMES FOR MINISTRY?

Usually, the person or couple kneels at, or sits in, chairs that are arranged on the platform or front of the Church. As the Presbytery gathers around, the candidate should allow himself to worship God freely in tongues. This burst of "edification" (I Cor. 14:1-4) brings the candidate into an immediate conversation with God. Then, as the Presence of the Lord moves, the candidate should prayerfully open his mind to hear from God and listen as the ministry begins to speak. Do not continue speaking in tongues or praising God when the prophetic word is coming! Listen and hear what the Spirit is saying to you!

Luke 8:18 - TAKE HEED THEREFORE HOW YE HEAR: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

Luke 8:18 (Amplified) - "Be careful therefore HOW YOU LISTEN, for to him who has will more be given, and from him who does not have, even what he thinks and guesses and supposes that he has will be taken away."

Rev. 2:7 - "He that hath an ear, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH unto the Churches. . ."

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

26. HOW SHOULD THE LOCAL CHURCH PREPARE FOR THIS TYPE OF MINISTRY?

There should be a concerted effort of the entire Church to seek the face of God. Since this is a ministry that involves the entire congregation, everyone should intensify his prayer schedule, diligently be present in the services, and strive in every way possible to open himself to a fresh visitation of God.

27. THE CHURCH MAINTAINS THE “PROPHETIC TOUCH” THROUGH WORSHIP AND FAITH

The Congregation has an amazing effect upon the atmosphere in this type of a meeting. Earnest pre-service prayer, fervent worship and everyone’s expectant attitude of faith will make or break the meeting.

28. THERE IS A PLACE FOR PASTORAL OVERSIGHT

Some people should receive ministry and some should not. It is the Pastor’s ministry to guide the activities of his sheep. Sometimes explanation will be in order, so the entire church can benefit by what God is doing.

29. IS IT PROPER TO RECORD THE PROPHECIES FOR FURTHER REVIEW?

It is good to have a record of the prophecies. However, having a message in writing does not guarantee anything! It is the spirit of faith that brings it to pass. (I Timothy 1:18)

Usually, a person can remember the important things that God is emphasizing, and if the Holy Spirit can’t make His points of emphasis, certainly man can’t either! The Pastor will go over prophecies with the individual and counsel regarding the direction indicated. I Timothy 4:15 - “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting (progress) may appear to all.”

30. PROBLEMS ARE CREATED BY “THE HOME PRAYER MEETING” WHEN THEY LAY HANDS ON PEOPLE AND PROPHECY OVER THEM!

Someone must be responsible for what is said and done. God has given government ministries that safeguard people from foolish actions. People should certainly pray, but the place for authoritative, life-changing, directive prophecy is in the Assembly!

I Cor. 14:12 “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may EXCEL TO THE EDIFYING OF THE CHURCH.”

I Cor. 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

I Cor. 14:12 (Amplified)- “So it is with yourselves; since you are so eager and ambitious to possess spiritual endowments and manifestations of Holy Spirit, (concentrate on) striving to excel and to abound (in them) IN WAYS THAT WILL BUILD UP THE CHURCH.”

31. REASONS WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD HAVE THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AND PROPHECY BY THE PRESBYTERY.

- a. It stimulates the whole Church into seeking God in fasting and prayer which brings dynamic results
when done with the right motive.
- b. It helps to establish the will of God for the individual by:
 - (1) Confirming the person's ministry in Body of Christ.
 - *Confirmation to the candidate.
 - *Confirmation to the Pastor
 - *Confirmation to the Congregation
 - (2) The impartation of spiritual gifts and graces.
 - (3) Giving special help or guidance by divine revelation.
 - (4) Strengthening the person's relationship to the Local Church.
 - (5) Providing a tremendous guide to the Pastor in further counseling.
- c. It enables the person to war a good warfare.
- d. In some cases, it brings liberation from bondage.
- e. It reveals special needs to be prayed for.
- f. It helps to develop confidence.
- g. It helps to develop ministries.
- h. It helps to reveal and emphasize the various ministries and functions of the Body (No one person has it all!)
- i. It helps to eliminate ineffective activity or ministry in the Church brought about by congregational voting on the basis of "popularity" or "rotation".
- j. It helps to make the person more submissive to God and the ministry of the local Church.
- k. It greatly lifts the enthusiasm of the whole Church, which in turn affects our ministry to God, to the Body, and to the world!
- l. By having the laying on of hands and prophecy by the Presbytery in the local Church under proper supervision, the individual's cry and hunger for God is met in a healthy environment. This acts as a safeguard for the one that might seek such experiences apart from his own Church family.